On the Manner and Means of the Propagation and Diffusion of the Christian Religion.

(From the Literary Remains.) Circa 1764.

Among the grounds for the truth of the Christian religion, that which is drawn from the manner and means of its propagation and diffusion is by no means one of the least.

Herein the immediate hand of God is said to manifest itself. I deny nothing; but in order to convince myself of it, I may well be permitted to consider the natural course of things somewhat more closely, to see how far a religion could have prospered through this alone, whose otherwise proven correctness I set aside in the meantime.

One has three matters to consider in the introduction of any novelty: 1) How advantageous the external circumstances are, 2) how powerful the means are, 3) how strong the obstacles are.

Let this also be my guiding thread here. Initially, I will survey the external circumstances under which the Christian religion was introduced. Namely:

1. The circumstances in which the other then-prevailing religions found themselves, a) the Jewish (1st Main Chapter), b) the Pagan (2nd Main Chapter);
2. The circumstances in which sound human reason or philosophy then found itself (3rd Main Chapter).

Hereupon I will estimate the means which the first Christians used for the diffusion of their new doctrine. Namely:

1. In respect of their method of teaching (4th Main Chapter),
2. In respect of their social association (5th Main Chapter).

Finally, I will judge the obstacles that were opposed to the new religion:

1. By the magistrate (6th Main Chapter),
2. By the philosophers (7th Main Chapter).

And to this investigation, I say to myself, undertake as an honest man. See everywhere with your own eyes. Distort nothing, gloss over nothing. As the conclusions flow, so let them flow. Do not dam their stream, do not divert it.

1st Main Chapter.

Of the Jewish Religion.

Here we wish to consider 1) the circumstances of the religion itself, 2) the circumstances of the people who professed it.

I. Section.

The Jewish religion had departed far 1) from its purity, 2) from its unity*.

1. 2. Of the Divisions and Sects of the Jewish Religion.

II. Section.

Of the Political Circumstances of the Jewish People.

* Here to be read: "Ph. Jacobi Hartmanni Commentarius de rebus gestis Christianorum sub

Apostolis" [Commentary on the Deeds of the Christians under the Apostles]. Berolini in 4. 1699 [16091 in text]. v. "Act. Erudit." anno 1700, p. 398. conf. les "Nouveaux Memoires d'Artigny", T. I. p. 201.

2nd Main Chapter.

Of the Pagan Religion.

And indeed 1) of the religion of the rabble, 2) of the wiser.

1. The religion of the rabble had purely local deities, whom the Romans left in their worth or even adopted.

2. The religion of the wiser.

3rd Main Chapter.

Of Philosophy.

1. Of the decline of the principal ancient sects.
2. Of the rise of the newer,
    1. the Eclectic,
    2. the Pythagorean-Platonic.

I.

The principal of the ancient famous sects were without heads. See the passage of Seneca in the *Quaestiones naturales* [*Natural Questions*].

And those who still taught these sects taught them with many corruptions. This cannot be better illustrated than from the narrative of Justinus regarding his *studio philosophico* [philosophical study]. What sort of concept does he form of the Stoics! With the Pythagoreans, the mathematical preliminary exercises frightened him away, which ought equally to have held him back from the Platonic school, had not the new Platonists relaxed [*relachiert*] themselves in this respect also from the principles of their master.

To leap over all philosophical preliminary exercises, especially the mathematical—which, its own truths set aside, becomes indispensable merely by the fact that it accustoms our spirit to order and distinct, exact concepts and teaches it what demonstration is—to leap over these, I say, and to begin with that which the speculation has of the bold and wonderful: means taking the direct path to fanaticism [*Schwärmerei*].

I must confess that Justinus also seems to me to deserve this reproach. His desire to know God was praiseworthy. But as God has revealed Himself to men only through His works, so it is necessary also to study these works and to ascend upon the ladder of truths which one abstracts from these works to the great truths of the existence and attributes of God.

II.

1. 2.

4th Main Chapter.

Of the Method of Teaching of the First Christians.

It was framed according to all possible didactic prudence. For
1. It contented itself for the most part merely with refuting the other religions.
2. It displayed from the outside only the great and beautiful proposition of natural religion.
Here one must treat of the *doctrina arcani* [secret doctrine]. Most of our theologians hold with Kortholt* that this *doctrina arcani* concerned only the rites and *symbola* [symbols] of the sacraments, but by no means the dogmas, and only arose toward the end of the second century. I cannot be of this opinion, yet I am just as little satisfied with the manner in which the Papists, especially Schelstrate*, seek to substantiate the contrary, and least of all with the conclusions which they draw therefrom.
* "Dissert. de disciplina arcani" [Dissertation on the Discipline of the Secret], habita Wittebergae 1683. And "Epistola ad amicum, qua Responsio ad Schelstrati Dissert. Apologet. continetur" [Letter to a Friend, in which is contained the Answer to Schelstrate's Apologetic Dissertation]. Gothae 4to 1687. vid. Act. Erudit. T. I. Suppl. p. 15. * "De sacro Antiocheno Concilio" [On the Sacred Council of Antioch] and "Dissert. apologetica de Disciplina arcani contra Tenzelium" [Apologetic Dissertation on the Discipline of the Secret against Tentzel], Romae in 4to 1685. v. Act. Erudit. anno 1685. p. 541.
Meanwhile, it seems that merely these conclusions and the fear of the same have driven our theologians to that other extreme.
I will not enter into this controversy, but merely communicate the remarks which I have made in my own reading of the first Church Fathers upon this point.

1. That the *doctrina arcani* arose far earlier than merely toward the end of the second *seculum* [century], I prove a) from the nature of the matter itself, b) from testimonies, and indeed from traces of the same
    1. in the reproaches of the pagans, and especially
    2. of Celsus,
    3. in Pliny.
2. The *doctrina arcani* was no imitation of the pagan mysteries, but rather a very wholesome prudence, lest the pagans turn the very weapons with which they attacked the Christians back against them. Had they not already, merely in the article of the divinity of Christ, to make the so often mocked mythology of the pagans their bulwark? See the Apology of Justinus.
3. One must make a distinction among the dogmas which they concealed. Some they concealed only from pagans in general, others from the catechumens. The express passage of Cyrillus on this account. Which were the dogmas of the first kind, which the dogmas of the second kind.
4. The *doctrina arcani* ceased as soon as Christianity became the dominant Church and no longer had to fear the mockeries of the pagans. If there were indeed still catechumens

down into the seventh century, they were nevertheless of a completely different kind.
3. With their proper dogmas they held back and thereby piqued curiosity.
The examples are innumerable in ancient and modern history, how many adherents mere curiosity can procure.
Cyrillus himself says in one place that with many, curiosity was the primary motive why they joined the Christians.
Conjecture concerning those who postponed their baptism. They were people who had doubtless sated their curiosity, and who feared to exchange the abandoned superstition only for another. Conf. Tob. Pfanneri, "De Catechumenis antiquae Eccles. liber." [Book on the Catechumens of the Ancient Church]. Gothae in 12 v. Act. Erudit. anno 1688. p. 334.
4. And knew how to awaken through the holiness of their life a great prejudice in favor of the purity of their dogmas.
5. And finally they knew, when they disclosed these secret dogmas, how to cloak them 1) through a pseudo-philosophy that was then in fashion; 2) to substantiate them through spurious and forged prophecies and books.

5th Main Chapter.

Of the Social Associations of the First Christians.

1. Of their desire to please all [*Allengefallenheit*].
2. Of their community of goods and the extraordinary support which the rich let the needy enjoy.

Avarice was among the first Christians the most abominable vice, which contained all others within itself; gentleness, on the other hand, and the readiness to share one's estate, the primary virtue.
In particular, this support of those who fell into persecutions on account of the name of Christ was quite incredible. Whoever had nothing in his estate to send them was bound to fast and to send them the portion of food for that day.

3. Of their indulgence toward all kinds of heretics.

One can consider this indulgence as a proof of the modesty and love of the first Christians; but does it cease on that account to have had the effects of the finest and most studied policy?
Its influence upon the diffusion of the Christian religion consisted, however, in that
a) The separation from the pagan religion became so much greater. For every founder of a sect now worked for his own account and procured for himself among the pagans the adherents whom he could not find among the Christians.
b) Those who allowed themselves to be seduced by the Christians were perhaps people who otherwise would have leaped back again to the pagan religion if one had wished to contest their freedom to follow their particular opinions. But since one indulged them, they or their children came back by degrees into the bosom of the common [catholic] Church, which had possessed the prudence never entirely to reject them.
c) Many of these sects knew how to withdraw themselves from the persecutions and grew so

much more quietly into a future reinforcement of the great heap, as the latter began to press more sharply for unity in doctrine.
E. g. Even the adherents of Simon were included by the pagans under the title of Christians (Origen *contra Cels.* lib. V) [*Against Celsus*, Book 5]. But since they declared the veneration of idols to be an indifferent matter, they could easily withdraw themselves from persecutions; *idem* [the same author], lib. VI, and Justinus, *Apol.* I, 26, explicitly says that they were left in peace when the Christians were openly persecuted. Yet as numerous as this sect was initially, it had melted away so greatly toward the middle of the third century that Origen knew few or none anymore. They were lost: and where else than into the bosom of the orthodox Church?
So the snow that falls upon the mountains is destined in its time to swell the stream of the valleys.

4. Of their leniency toward the slaves.

Pseudo-Clemens *Constit. Apost.* lib. VIII. c. 33: "Ego Petrus et ego Paulus constituimus, ut servi quinque diebus operentur, Sabbato vero et Dominica quiescant vel ferientur in ecclesia propter doctrinam pietatis. Sabbatum enim diximus creationis habere rationem, Dominicam resurrectionis." ["I Peter and I Paul have ordained that slaves shall work five days, but on the Sabbath and the Lord's Day they shall rest or keep holiday in the church for the sake of the doctrine of piety. For we have said that the Sabbath has the account of creation, the Lord's Day that of the resurrection."] And further it says: "magna hebdomade tota et ea, quae illam sequitur, servi otientur" ["in the whole great week (Holy Week) and that which follows it, slaves shall be at leisure"], likewise still many festivals.
Among the Greeks, with whom servitude was otherwise most tolerable, there was an express law, "μὴ ἐξεῖναι ἀργὸν τρέφειν οἰκέτην" [*mē exeinai argon trephein oiketēn* — that it shall not be permitted to maintain an idle slave].
NB. This law Ulpianus has preserved for us (v. Petiti *Comment. in leges atticas* Lib. II. Tit. VI. Edit. Heinecc. p. 265), and he adds: "διόπερ οἱ μὲν αὐλοποιούς, οἱ δὲ μαχαιροποιούς εἶχον τους δούλους" [*dioper hoi men aulopoious, hoi de machairopoious eichon tous doulous* — wherefore some held their slaves as flute-makers, others as knifesmiths]. But why was it nevertheless a shame if the Greeks not only engaged in a trade themselves, but even allowed it to be driven merely through their slaves? I have cited in my *Sophocles* a passage from Plutarch.
The first Christians, namely, celebrated both days, although they did not hold the celebration of the Sabbath to be necessary. Why should slaves not gladly have embraced a religion that remitted to them two sevenths of their hardships?
I will not meanwhile assert that Peter and Paul really gave this law, who rather left complete freedom in this point. Enough that one sees therefrom what was customary in the first times.
I know also that the celebration from all work on such days was prohibited in subsequent times; but that happened only when Christianity was already established and it was now time that the Christians should also finally become useful citizens to the state. E. g. in the *Concilio Laodiceo* [Council of Laodicea], which was celebrated toward the middle of the fourth century. Cap. 29. "Quod non oporteat Christianos judaizare et in Sabbato ociari; diem autem dominicum praeferentes ociari, si modo possint, ut Christiani. Quod si inventi fuerint judaizare, Anathema

sint a Christo" ["That Christians ought not to judaize and be idle on the Sabbath; but preferring the Lord's Day to be idle, if only they can, as Christians. But if they be found judaizing, let them be Anathema from Christ"].

6th Main Chapter.

Of the Obstacles Which the Magistrate Opposed to the Christian Religion.

Here it will depend upon a correct concept of the persecutions, to which the following remarks will contribute somewhat.

First, of the persecutions of the Jews. These could not go far, because the Jews according to their political constitution of that time could not touch their life. If indeed Christians were slain by them, they had usurped this power not without danger.

This is shown by the death of St. James. The High Priest Ananus made use of the time when the governor Festus had died and the new one, Albinus, was still on the way. This presumption also turned out very ill for him; Albinus wrote him a very angry letter on that account, and after three months he was deposed from his priesthood by Agrippa.

Afterward, of the persecutions of the Romans.

I. Under Nero.

It was neither general nor a proper religious persecution. For he did not have them executed as Christians, but, as is known, as alleged incendiaries, as wretches upon whom he believed he could roll the hatred that his curious or proud cruelty had drawn upon him. "Ergo (Taciti *Annal.* XV. cap. 44) abolendo rumori Nero subdidit reos, et quaesitissimis poenis adfecit, quos per flagitia invisos, vulgus Christianos appellabat. Auctor nominis ejus Christus, qui Tiberio imperitante per Procuratorem Pontium Pilatum supplicio affectus erat. Repressaque in praesens exitialis superstitio rursus erumpebat, non modo per Judaeam, originem ejus mali, sed per urbem etiam, quo cuncta undique atrocia aut pudenda confluunt celebranturque. Igitur primo correpti qui fatebantur, deinde indicio eorum multitudo ingens, haud perinde in crimine incendii, quam odio humani generis convicti sunt. Et pereuntibus addita ludibria, ut ferarum tergis contecti laniatu canum interirent, aut crucibus affixi, aut flammandi, atque ubi defecisset dies, in usum nocturni luminis urerentur. Hortos suos ei spectaculo Nero obtulerat et Circense ludicrum edebat, habitu aurigae permixtus plebi vel curriculo insistens. Unde quanquam adversus sontes et novissima exempla meritos miseratio oriebatur, tanquam non utilitate publica, sed in saevitiam unius absumerentur" ["Therefore, to wipe out the rumor, Nero substituted as culprits and affected with the most exquisite punishments those who, hated for their abominations, the common people called Christians. The author of this name, Christ, had been executed under Tiberius's reign by the Procurator Pontius Pilate. And suppressed for the present, the ruinous superstition broke out again, not only through Judea, the origin of this evil, but also through the City, where all things atrocious or shameful from everywhere flow together and are celebrated. Therefore, those were first seized who confessed; then, upon their information, a vast multitude was convicted, not so much on the charge of arson as for hatred of the human race. And mockings

were added to their deaths, so that covered with skins of wild beasts they perished by the tearing of dogs, or affixed to crosses, or set on fire, and when day had failed, were burned for the use of nightly illumination. Nero had offered his own gardens for that spectacle and presented a Circensian game, mixed with the plebs in the dress of a charioteer or standing upon his chariot. Whence, although against guilty persons and those who deserved the extreme examples, compassion arose, as if they were being consumed not for the public utility, but to the savagery of one man"].

If the last words are properly taken, there lies in them even a reprimand and a reproach that Nero had the Christians executed indeed on account of unproven crimes, but not on account of their superstition. Orosius, who (lib. VII. c. VII) adds: "Ac per omnes provincias pari persecutione Christianos excruciari imperavit" ["And he ordered Christians to be tortured with equal persecution throughout all the provinces"], deserves no belief. One knows him as a writer who always drew more out of his sources than is inside them. Sulpicius Severus is also suspicious when he says: "Latis legibus religio vetabatur, palamque edictis propositis, Christianum esse non licebat." ["By laws passed, the religion was forbidden, and publicly posted edicts declared that it was not permitted to be a Christian."] For were not Christians themselves among the household of Nero? And what did Nero care about that? He, to whom all gods and religions were indifferent, down to his *Dea Syria* [Syrian Goddess], until he exchanged even this for an even more wretched misery.

And one need only read in the Acts of the Apostles how Paul was held in Rome, whether this looks very much like a persecution! And why he was finally even set free! What is told of his subsequent martyr's death at Rome alongside Peter is full of contradictions and fables, and he can have been executed without the Christians in general being persecuted on that account, as Nicephorus himself and others make his disputes with Simon the principal cause.

II. Under Domitian.

This one also has not the slightest appearance of a general persecution. It was also perhaps not much more terrible than that which this very same emperor let go forth against the philosophers. And perhaps indeed that Christianity was merely the pretext there, and here a real hatred against wisdom of the world was the ground.

Many, says Dio Cassius Domit. cap. 14, "ἐς τὰ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἤθη ἐξοκέλλοντες" [*es ta tōn Ioudaiōn ēthē exokellontes* — leaning off into the customs of the Jews], "qui ad mores Judaeorum aberraverant" [who had strayed to the customs of the Jews], were condemned on account of impiety [*Ohngötterei* / atheism], and some lost their life, others only their estate.

Of the persecution of the philosophers, on the other hand, this same historian says, after he has recounted that he had Rusticus Arulenus put out of the way, "ὅτι ἐφιλοσόφει" [*hoti ephilosophei* — because he practiced philosophy]: "Ἄλλοι τε ἐκ τῆς αὐτῆς ταύτης τῆς κατὰ τὴν φιλοσοφίαν αἰτίας συχνοὶ διώλοντο καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ πάντες ἐξηλάθησαν αὖθις ἐκ τῆς Ῥώμης" [*Alloi te ek tēs autēs tautēs tēs kata tēn philosophian aitias sychnoi diōlonto kai hoi loipoi pantes exēlathēsan authis ek tēs Rhōmēs* — And many others perished from this selfsame cause concerning philosophy, and all the rest were driven out again from Rome]. They were frequently slain, and

all the rest chased out of the city.
It is quite extraordinary when Kortholt and others count the persecution which Domitian let go forth against the descendants of David among the persecutions against the Christians. It is true, it struck some Christians along with them, as the grandsons of Jude, who is called a brother of the Lord according to the flesh; but it is nevertheless so little to be counted as a persecution of Christianity that nothing could have been more advantageous to Christianity than if Domitian had succeeded in his purpose to exterminate all descendants of David.
In the passage of Orosius which treats of this, instead of *invidetur* [it is envied], *diffiditur* [it is mistrusted] must evidently be read.
"Tertia persecutio", writes Sulpicius Severus, "per Trajanum fuit: qui cum tormentis et quaestionibus nihil in Christianis morte aut poena dignum reperisset, saeviri in eos ultra vetuit." ["The third persecution was through Trajan: who, when he had found nothing worthy of death or punishment in the Christians by tortures and interrogations, forbade further fury against them."] It is false that Trajan ordered a persecution against the Christians. Such by no means appears from the letter which Pliny wrote to him on that account, and the testimony of Eusebius (*Histor. Eccl.* lib. III. c. 32) contradicts it completely. "Μετὰ Νέρωνα καὶ Δομετιανόν, κατὰ τοῦτον οὖ νῦν τοὺς χρόνους ἐξετάζομεν (namely Trajan) μερικῶς καὶ κατὰ πόλεις ἐξ ἐπαναστάσεως δήμων, τὸν καθ' ἡμῶν κατέχει λόγος ἀνακινηθῆναι διωγμόν" [*Meta Nerōna kai Dometianon, kata touton hou nyn tous chronous exetazomen merikōs kai kata poleis ex epanastaseōs dēmōn, ton kath' hēmōn katechei logos anakinēthēnai diōgmon* — After Nero and Domitian, under him whose times we are now examining, report holds that the persecution against us was stirred up partially and city by city from uprisings of the populace]. The persecution was only partial, in this or that city, and was occasioned not by public commands, but by the uprising of the rabble.
1. The persecutions were almost never general. In general, they also came too late. The first persecution of Nero falls into the 30th year after Christ's Ascension. Where had His disciples not already arrived by that time?
2. Were almost never commanded by formal laws.
3. Almost always had another cause than religion. The pagans punished the first Christians not so much on account of their religion as on account of the transgression of the laws. The pagans had no laws which bound consciences and commanded to believe this or that. But they had laws which prohibited all assemblies, and especially all nocturnal assemblies, under heavy penalty.* Over these they held, and when the Christians transgressed these, they were persecuted and punished not as Christians, but as transgressors of the laws. Yea, I add freely: they deserved to be punished, and indeed so much the more as their religion did not require the like assemblies in the least. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name", etc.
* According to the laws of Romulus: "Nocturnas in templo vigilias ne habento" ["They shall not hold nocturnal vigils in the temple"]. Conf. Balduinus *ad leges Rom.* in Heineccii *Jurisprud. R. et Att.* T. I. p. 34. According to the laws of the Twelve Tables: "Si quis in urbe coitus nocturnos agitaverit, capite luito." ["If anyone shall have conducted nocturnal assemblies in the city, let him pay with his head."] Tab. IX. lex VI. Edit. Funcc. p. 400. Balduinus *in leges XII. Tab.* c. 4. l. c. p. 74.

I say, these meetings did not belong to the essence of the religion. It could subsist without them, be spread without them. But suppose these meetings had been an essential part of the religion or had been held as such by the first Christians, there still remained to them another way before they, contrary to the laws, arranged secret and nocturnal assemblies; namely this, that they report themselves in that regard to the magistrate and procure permission for it. This the Jews had also been obliged to do, and their synagogues were consequently exempted from the forbidden *hetaeriae* [secret clubs / societies].

To what end, then, the running together? To what end the nocturnal assemblies of whole crowds of all ages and sexes? These were bound to be suspicious to a good policy.

Out of these secret, forbidden assemblies Celsus took his first ground against the Christians. That Origen answered very poorly to it, Mosheim also recognized (p. 16). But that the answer which Mosheim gives to it is more sufficient, though it is less offensive, I hardly believe. For

1. It is false that the assemblies of the Christians were not included among the forbidden ones, and that this prohibition banned only voluptuous, seditious, and scandalous assemblies. They were all forbidden without exception. See what the Consul says in Livy, cap. XV. lib. 39, when the Bacchanalia were abolished.
2. And whence did the pagans know that the assemblies of the Christians were really so innocent? Does not Mosheim here, just as well as Origen, presuppose as proven and settled what is in dispute between him and Celsus?

That the Romans, however, in general never persecuted a religion as religion, but only insofar as it was bound up with certain arrangements which were contrary to good morals or to their political constitution, one recognizes clearly from the extermination of the Bacchanalia under the consulship of Sp. Postumius Albinus and D. Marcius Philippus (anno u. c. 568, a. C. 186), which Livy *l. c.* describes at length. For after they had persecuted such with the utmost severity, they nevertheless left them free to him who should deem himself bound thereto for conscience' sake, and ordained only that they should not be held without the prior knowledge of the praetor and permission of the senate. "Si quis tale sacrum solenne et necessarium duceret, nec sine religione et piaculo se id omittere posse, apud praetorem profiteretur" ["If anyone should deem such a sacred rite solemn and necessary, and that he could not omit it without religious offense and crime, he should declare it before the praetor"], etc. c. 18 s. f.

Remarks on the Narrative of Livy Concerning the Extermination of the Bacchanalia at Rome.

1. Their author in Etruria was a common, ignorant Greek. "Graecus ignobilis in Etruriam primum venit nulla cum arte earum, quas multas ad animorum corporumque cultum nobis eruditissima omnium gens invexit, sacrificulus et vates" ["A low-born Greek came first into Etruria, endowed with none of those arts, many of which that most learned of all nations introduced to us for the cultivation of minds and bodies, a petty sacrificer and prophet"], etc.

To found a new sect, to preach a new religion, an unlearned man is always more adept than a learned one. Suppose even that a learned man had thought out ever so dazzling a system;

suppose he possessed ever so much ambition to make this system into a dominant religion and himself into the head of the same: if he does not possess the power which Moses possessed; if he is not already army commander and lawgiver of a whole people; or if he cannot immediately draw men who occupy this post into his interest; if he must seek his first adherents among the crowd: he will truly have to disown his whole character, alter his whole way of thinking, merely to be in some measure fortunate. Truth and philosophy will not bring him far with the rabble; the artificial eloquence of the school is too delicate a tool to set such clumsy masses in motion: he must cease to be a philosopher and orator; he must become a *sacrificulus et vates*, or pretend to be one.

2. "Nec is", Livy continues, "qui aperta religione propalam et quaestum et disciplinam profitendo animos horrore imbueret, sed occultorum et nocturnorum antistes sacrorum." ["Nor was he one who, by open religion, publicly professing both gain and doctrine, would imbue minds with horror, but a priest of secret and nocturnal rites."]

That is the true masterpiece of a new founder of religion. He must not say: "Come, I will teach you a new religion." Such a discourse awakens shuddering in the crowd. He begins with scruples which he adduces against the customary religion, and adduces in confidence as a man who has the welfare of a friend at heart. Out of this scruple become *assertiones* [assertions]. Out of these assertions arise voluntary separations, at first only in trifles, finally in the whole. "I do not despise", the Greek Bacchus priest will have said, "your gods; they would be powerful enough to show you much good, if they were not perhaps restricted by a more powerful deity." — "And who could this be?" asked pious curiosity. — "I only surmise. For the gods, as you well know, are always one more powerful than the other. The gods of wise and famous Greece, for example. Yet even among these there are some of quite special power and readiness to help men who are instructed in certain rites pleasing to them." — "Name these to me then." — "They are revered in Greece itself very secretly." — "But you know them, surely?" — "I know them; and know them as very jealous beings who do not wish to be known by everyone, who do not wish to have their secrets brought among the rabble, because they have bound once and for all their unfailing assistance with the knowledge of these secrets. A shudder comes over me, let us speak of something else" — "I held you for my friend" — "And hold me no longer for such?" — "Can I? Friends ought to have all things in common; and you withhold from me that which ought to be common not to friends alone, but to all men." — "Do not lay it so close to me. There is no lack on the part of my will; but test yourself, whether you are capable of hearing, believing, doing quite new, extraordinary things." — "You were capable of it, after all?" — "But what self-conquest it cost me. I still tremble; enough, it is overcome." — "I too will overcome it" — Now curiosity is at the highest; now readiness is there; now the game takes its beginning.

3. "Initia erant quae primo paucis tradita sunt: deinde vulgari coepta per viros mulieresque." ["The beginnings were things which were at first delivered to a few; then they began to be spread through men and women."]

To procure the first dozen adherents, right blind, obedient, enthusiastic adherents, is the hardest for the new founder of religion. But once he has only these, the work proceeds far better. What man has not other men over whom nature or fortune bestows upon him a kind of superiority?

Who, when he believes himself enlightened, does not gladly wish to enlighten in turn? The most unlearned, the most simple is therein always the most busy. One sees this every day. Let a limited mind get certain half-knowledges of this or that science and art. Upon every occasion he will prate of it, etc.

Especially the little women! It is too well known how excellently all heads of newer religions and sects, like the founder of the first in Paradise, have known how to make use of them.

4. "Additae* voluptates religioni vini et epularum, quo plurium animi illicerentur." ["The pleasures of wine and banquets were added to religion, whereby the minds of more might be enticed."]

This reminds me of the love-feasts [*agapae*] of the first Christians. To what end these sacred feastings? I do not in the least believe that at their institutions the laws of decorum and temperance were transgressed. But this transgression followed very soon, and one need only see how greatly the Apostle Jude already in his Epistle, v. 12, declaims against the abuses that occurred thereby. Also the Apostle Peter, 2 Epist. 2, 13! In which passage it is surely no question whether *ἀγάπαις* [*agapais* — love-feasts] must be read for *ἀπάταις* [*apatais* — deceptions], as it appears clearly enough from the parallelism with the Epistle of Jude. These abuses grew also with time so much that it was held necessary first to restrict them at the Church councils and finally to forbid them altogether.

* "Additae" [added], says Livy. They were therefore not the principal work. The deceiver did not debut [*debitierte* / *debütierte*] with them either. v. the "Misopogon" of Julian, of the French traduct. p. 53 and 124. In the 4th century v. P. I. Tilemanni *Commentarium in Epistolam Judae* [Commentary on the Epistle of Jude] in Appendix *de Agapis*. Marburgi in 8vo 1693. et Act. Erudit. anno 1694. p. 368.

Pliny says of these love-feasts that they gathered "ad capiendum cibum, promiscuum tamen et innoxium" ["to take food, promiscuous (indiscriminate / mixed) nevertheless and harmless"]. I find no commentator who wishes to explain this *promiscuus*; so that I doubt whether many have understood it properly. Sartorius at least did not understand it, when he translates it: they came together among themselves, yet to dine after a common manner and without anyone's detriment. The uncertainty in which the editors also find themselves, whether they ought to draw the *tamen* to *promiscuus* or to *innoxium*, shows already that they have not seen clearly enough. I believe that not so much all foods mixed together are meant thereby, as the mixture of the guests themselves of all kinds of rank, age, and sex. This mixture was to the ancients in their banquets something quite unusual and offensive. And therefore Pliny wishes to say: although from this side their banquets were offensive, they were nevertheless otherwise free of all outrage.

That the accusations of Caecilius in Minucius Felix are true, although they applied only to the Carpocratians and the first Christians had to attribute it to themselves through their all too great gentleness and indulgence toward all kinds of heretics, if the pagans attributed what they learned of the heretics to Christians in general.

5. "Hujus mali labes ex Etruria Romam, velut contagione morbi, penetravit. Primo urbis magnitudo capacior patientiorque talium malorum, ea celavit." ["The taint of this evil penetrated from Etruria to Rome, as if by contagion of disease. At first the magnitude of

the city, more receptive and tolerant of such evils, concealed it."]

"Enthusiasm is a real contagious disease of the soul, which spreads with an incredible speed." Shaftesbury.

His first scene the new founder of religion must choose in the country, in small places. But once he has procured the first adherents there, he seeks a larger theater, and the largest city is for him always the best. One disciple begins on this corner, the other on that; the different flames eat on in silence; finally they meet together, and half the city stands in the most terrible conflagration before the police has even noticed smoke.

4. The persecutions could extend themselves to two considerable classes of people almost not at all:

1. to the Roman citizens,
2. to the slaves.

5. Many emperors did their utmost to restrict them, yea, even to remove the ground thereof. To the former refer their prohibitions against informers and the penalties threatened to them. Vid. Eusebius.

To the second is to be drawn the endeavor of the emperors to have Christ publicly acknowledged as a god. This is the true proper point of view from which one must consider what Tertullian recounts of Tiberius, Lampridius of Severus in this regard. v. Mosheim *de studio Ethnicorum Christianos imitandi* [On the Endeavor of the Pagans to Imitate the Christians]. Diss. Eccl., Vol. I. p. 357.

Of the Multitude of Martyrs.

In order to make comprehensible and intelligible that which the historians of the Church say of the innumerable multitude of martyrs, this remark may perhaps also not be useless: namely, that in the first times not only those were counted for martyrs who suffered persecutions on account of the name of Christ or even sealed their testimony with their blood, but also those who assisted the former in their prison in their sufferings with all their powers, furnished them the necessary sustenance, provided them with money in order to make themselves agreeable to their guards thereby. "Τοῦτο γὰρ ποιησάντων ὑμῶν, μαρτύριον ὑμῖν λογισθήσεται" [*Touto gar poiēsantōn hymōn, martyrion hymin logisthēsetai* — For if you do this, it shall be counted unto you for martyrdom]. Constit. Apost. lib. V. c. 1.

Martyrdom went with them above everything. If a catechumen became a martyr, he was not permitted to disturb himself in the least that he was not yet baptized. "Τὸ γὰρ πάθος τὸ ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ ἔσται αὐτῷ γνησιώτερον βάπτισμα" [*To gar pathos to hyper Christou estai autō gnēsiōteron baptisma* — For the suffering for Christ's sake shall be to him a more genuine baptism]. Constit. Apost. lib. 5. c. 6.

One recognizes here clearly a human evasion [*biaisierung*].

Never did the first Christians hold baptism, but indeed the Lord's Supper, to be indispensable, although the explicit declarations of Scripture for the indispensability of the former are present. "He that believeth not and is baptized"; "As often as ye do this". And why this? Because the Christians, especially the beginners, could indeed fall into circumstances where they could not

receive baptism, but never into circumstances where they could not partake of the Lord's Supper; in that they were permitted to be visited in prisons by their fellow believers, who could also eat and drink with them there and consequently receive the sacrament during the same.

7th Main Chapter.

Of the Mutual Endeavors of the Philosophers.

They opposed to the Christian religion
1. Wretched defenses and excuses of the pagan religion.
2. An equally incomprehensible, absurd philosophy.

Hither belongs the absurd philosophy of Celsus and the still far madder philosophy of Porphyry. Conf. Alciphron Dial. VI. p. m. 95. and ff.

Conclusion.

If from all that has hitherto been adduced it should follow that the Christian religion was propagated and diffused through quite natural means, let one beware of believing that anything disadvantageous to the religion itself could follow therefrom.

It is by no means a strange assertion among our theologians that Christ Himself could have come into the world at no more convenient time.*

* Mosheimii Comment. de rebus Christ. cap. I. § 3. "Quibus ex rebus rectissime statuunt, qui commodiore tempore filium Dei ad homines descendere potuisse negant." ["From which matters those decide most correctly who deny that the Son of God could have descended to men at a more convenient time."] conf. Origenes *contra Celsum* libr. II.

If now Christ Himself awaited the most convenient time, if He wished to support the great miracle of His manifestation not merely through sheer other miracles, but to subject it to the natural course of things: why will we lose sight of this natural course of things in its further diffusion?